

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.- 4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) A method for fabricating a thin film magnetic head including a magnetoresistive effective type thin film magnetic head element comprising a first and a second magnetic shielding films which are made of magnetic material, a first and a second shielding gap films which are made of non-magnetic material and located between said first and said second magnetic shielding films, a magnetoresistive effective element film which is located between said first and said second shielding gap films, a first and a second longitudinal bias-applying films which are located ~~in both sides~~ at respective side edges of said magnetoresistive effective element film, and a first and a second electrode films which are located so as to cover top surface edge portions of said magnetoresistive effective element film beyond said first and said second longitudinal bias-applying films, said method comprising the steps of:

forming said first shielding film on a ~~given~~ substrate,
forming said first shielding gap film on said first shielding film,
forming a magnetoresistive effective film on said first shielding gap film,
partially etching and removing said magnetoresistive effective film ~~via~~ using a first mask fabricated thereon to pattern and form said magnetoresistive effective element film,
forming said first and said second longitudinal bias-applying films ~~via said~~ using the first mask, ~~at both sides~~ at respective side edges of said magnetoresistive effective element film, so that the difference in surface level between said magnetoresistive effective element film and said first and said second longitudinal bias-applying films is set within ± 20 nm,

forming said first and said second electrode films so as to cover top surface edge portions of said magnetoresistive effective element film and said first and said second longitudinal bias-applying films,

forming said second shielding gas film so as to cover said magnetoresistive effective element film, said first and said second electrode films, and

forming said second shielding film on said second shielding gap film.

6. (Currently Amended) A fabricating method as defined in claim 5, wherein the ~~forming-step~~ of forming said first and said second longitudinal bias-applying films includes the steps of forming underfilms, forming hard magnetic films on said underfilms and forming protective films on said hard magnetic films, and ~~by~~-controlling the thicknesses of said underfilms and/or said protective films, such that the difference in surface level between said magnetoresistive effective element film and said first and said second longitudinal bias-applying films is set within ± 20 nm.

7. (Currently Amended) A fabricating method as defined in claim 5, the step of forming said first and second longitudinal bias-applying films further comprising the step of partially etching and removing said first shielding gas-gap film in the thickness direction, ~~wherein by~~and controlling the etching depth in the thickness direction of said first shielding gap ~~film~~,such that the difference in surface level between said magnetoresistive effective element film and said first and said second longitudinal bias-applying films is set within ± 20 nm.

8. (Currently Amended) A fabricating method as defined in claim 5, wherein said steps of forming the first and said second longitudinal bias-applying films and forming said first and said second electrode films ~~are formed by means of~~include sputtering.

9. (Currently Amended) A fabricating method as defined in claim 5, wherein a track width of said thin film magnetic head, which is defined by the distance between said first and said second electrode films, is set to 0.2 μm or ~~below~~ less.